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Books - Why Not?

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THE IOWA HOMEMAKER

"A Magazine for Homemakers from a Homemakers' School"

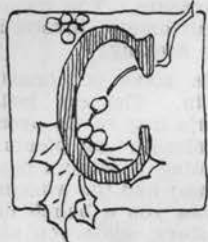
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Books—Why Not?

By CHARLES H. BROWN, Iowa State Librarian



CHRISTMAS is coming. Many of us are thinking over carefully, even anxiously, what will make the best gifts for the children. Candy and sweets too often result in regrets and castor oil; toys

—yes, they are exciting for a time, but too many mean distraction and tend to develop an inability to concentrate for any length of time. Wrecks and breakage come quickly. Then why not books, at least one or two, in place of half the candy and half the toys?

Seven years ago I started a plan which appears so successful that I venture to recommend it to the readers of the Iowa Homemaker. Every Christmas one of my boys found under the tree a book, selected because it was believed that it would form a permanent part of his library; a book well illustrated and one which the average boy would enjoy reading over and over again. At first the books were mainly picture books—Mother Goose Stories, Potter's Peter Rabbit Tales, The Story of the Three Bears, Cinderella, Mother Goose, and last but not most important, some poetry. These books were suitable for children from three to five years of age.

There was a well-defined theory back of the principle of this gift of books and stories to read aloud to tots of even two or three. I did not want my boys to form their first opinion of the pleasures of reading from the Diamond Dick, or other cheap thrillers—neither did I want them to obtain their impressions of the reading of good books from the fact that teachers require such reading for school work—valuable as such requirement is. I wanted them to know for themselves, without compulsion, the pleasures, both present and future, to be derived from good books.

A field left to itself will be filled with weeds. If sowing is commenced early the weeds will be crowded out—but the sowing must be done early. If you do not sow wheat, others will sow tares. The first few years count. The records of the Chicago Police Department show that of all persons arrested on criminal charges during one year, over one-fifth were under twenty years of age. It is better to have the foundations of the habit of reading started late than not started at all; but far better if our children can form such habits in our own homes early in life. What more can any of us say than did the old Lacedemonian, when asked

what he had done for the child in his charge, replied, "I made good and honest things pleasant to children."

It is quite impossible to keep children from the deteriorating influences of certain books, movies, and undesirable companions. We cannot bring up our children in a hothouse, altho some of us think such a procedure is possible and desirable. We can, however, keep the weeds out of their minds by filling their brains with wholesome thoughts and high ideals. Begin young, if possible, and don't give the weeds a chance. And don't force young plants. If you can read stories and have books available in the home the average child will prove quite insatiable, without being forced to it. He will, of course, pick up some volumes of trash, but you will find that he will come back, eventually, to the books worth while.

Stories, if wisely selected, have an immediate effect. The child's mind is very quick to grasp and make his own conclusions. I have heard of children who are afraid to go to bed. Is it any wonder when they hear from their parents newspaper stories of murders and thefts and see so much of the crude vulgarities which are found in the movies? Have you ever tried reading to the young tots at bedtime that pretty poem of Eugene Field's:

"Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night
Sailed off in a wooden shoe—
Sailed on a river of crystal light,
Into a sea of dew.

Where are you going, and what do you wish?

The old moon asked the three.
We have come to fish for the herring fish
That live in this beautiful sea;

Nets of silver and gold have we!
Said Wynken,
Blynken
And Nod.

* * * * *

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,
And Nod is a little head,
And the wooden shoe that sailed the
skies

Is a wee one's trundle-bed.
So shut your eyes while mother sings
Of wonderful sights that be,
And you shall see the beautiful things
As you rock in the misty sea,
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen
three:
Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod."

If the child can think of the bed as a wooden shoe that will take him up to the skies and let him fish among the stars, he will not have his thoughts filled with the terrible things that come with the dark. I know of two boys who object to any light in their bedroom because they like to look out of the window and see the stars, the sky, and the trees. Which is better?

Sometimes children hate to go to bed. Have you ever told them Stevenson's story of the children who have to go to bed by day? These few lines will run thru their heads many an evening:

"I have to go to bed and see
The birds still hopping on the tree,
Or hear the grown-up people's feet
Still going past me in the street.

* * * * *

And does it not seem hard to you,
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to go to bed by day?"

Some other evening, just before bedtime, why not tell them Kipling's story of the elephant child who had such an insatiable curiosity? He asked his father what a crocodile ate, and his father spanked him. He asked his mother what a crocodile ate, and his mother spanked him, and his uncle and his aunt spanked him and told him to forget about the crocodile. Then he ran away from home to find out for himself and came to the great, gray-green, greasy, Limpopo river, all set about with fever trees, to find out what the crocodile had for dinner. The crocodile told him to bend over close to the water and he would whisper and the elephant child bent way over and the crocodile got his nose and bit it and held on and on and on. The crocodile pulled,

(Continued on page 18)

A Home Library

By Mary Carolynn Davies

A little place of inglenooks
And books;
A place where still and cool
A quiet pool
Of candlelight upon the table
sleeps;
A spot that keeps
Unbroken, ready, waiting for our
need,
Peace—that is home indeed.
Enter, tired, restless one, and
dream and read.

Books—Why Not?

(Continued from page 3)

and the elephant child pulled, but the crocodile was stronger. Then came a great Bi-Coloured-Python-Rocked-Snake and hung onto the tree with his tail and hung onto the elephant child's legs with the other part of his body and together they pulled and pulled and pulled until the crocodile let go, but with a flop that could be heard all up and down the Limpopo. Ever afterwards all elephants have a long trunk instead of a blackish-bulgy nose.

Get Kipling's "Just So Stories" from your public library and read this to the children tonight. Then on other evenings read how the leopard got his spots, how the rhinoceros got his skin, and the camel got his hump. These stories will do immensely much more good than sermons or scoldings, or whippings, insofar as the future life of your boys and girls is concerned. Get from your public library Clara W. Hunt's "What Shall We Read to the Children," or better, buy a copy for yourself. (Published by Houghton Mifflin at \$1.00.) It will give you plenty of good advice and lists of many other good stories to tell or read during the long winter evenings.

Probably some of you are wondering by this time what to do after the story telling age is past. In reality, it never does pass. All of us like to be told stories, if we are human. The stories you tell to your children in their younger years will prepare them for a wide range of reading by their seventh or eighth year and will give them something which they will have for life—pleasant thoughts, high ideals of men and women, of courage, of beauty, of character, of all the things worth while in life. Who would want his children, as Channing Pollock said, to form their ideal of womanhood from Gloria Swanson? Why not give them an ideal of courage from Sydney Carton, who, in the Tale of Two Cities, gave up his life for the happiness of others? Why not let them form their ideal of womanhood from Florence Nightingale, from Clara Barton, or from the mother of Goethe. Just read how she brought up her boy:

"Air, fire, earth, and water I presented under the forms of princesses; and to all natural phenomena I gave a meaning, in which I almost believed more fervently than my little hearers. As we thought of paths which led from star to star, and that we should one day inhabit the stars, and thought of the great spirits we should meet there, I was as eager for the hours of story-telling as the children themselves; I was quite curious about the future course of my own improvisation, and any invitation which interrupted these evenings was disagreeable. There I sat and there Wolfgang held me with his large black eyes; and when the fate of one of his favorites was not according to his fancy, I saw the angry veins swell on his temples; I saw him repress his tears. He often burst in with, 'But, mother, the princess won't marry the nasty tailor, even if he does kill the giant!' And when I made a pause for the night, promising to continue it on the morrow, I was certain that he would in the meanwhile think it out for himself, and so he often stimulated my imagination."

It is sometimes difficult to know where to buy good books and what books to

buy. Beware of book agents! They offer oftentimes books which prove worse than useless. The best books for your children, or for yourself, for that matter, cannot be obtained thru traveling book agents.

I would suggest that first you go to your public library—everyone in Iowa has some public library near by—and ask the librarian to let you look over some of the children's books. Ask her for Frances Olcott's "The Children's Reading," published by Houghton Mifflin, from which I have quoted some of these illustrations. You will find lists of all sorts of books for children of all ages. Then inquire for the graded list of books for children published by the American Library Association and prepared by the Elementary School Library Committee of the National Educational Association. You will find books arranged in various sections for the first three grades, grades four to six, and grades seven to nine.

Ask your librarian the best place in your section to buy books. The book dealer in your town may not have many of the better class of books, but he can obtain them for you.

I am listing just a few titles of books which I have bought for my boys. These few titles may give you a list which will make a beginning. The first four titles will show you what to read and what to buy. Stop in at your public library and look over these books. Ask your librarian also to give you or loan you a sixteen-page leaflet published by the American Library Association and entitled, "Gifts for Children's Bookshelves."

My best wish for you is that you will take as much pleasure out of your children's enjoyment of these stories and of their books as I have.

FOR YOU TO READ:

Hunt—What Shall We Read to the Children. Houghton Mifflin Company. \$1.00.

Olcott—The Children's Reading. Houghton Mifflin Company. \$1.50.

American Library Association—Graded List of Books for Children. Published by the A. L. A., Chicago, Illinois. \$1.25.

American Library Association—Gifts for Children's Bookshelves.

FOR MY BOYS UP TO SIX:

Brooks—The Golden Goose Book. Warne. \$3.00. (Contains stories of The Three Bears, Three Little Pigs, and Tom Thumb.)

Brooke—Johnny Crow's Garden. Warne. \$1.75.

Brooke—Johnny Crow's Party. Warne. \$1.75.

Lang—Little Red Riding Hood. Longmans. 68c.

Lang—Cinderella. Longman's. 68c.

Perkins—Dutch Twins. Houghton Mifflin. \$1.75. School edition. 88c.

Potter—Tailor of Gloucester. Benjamin Bunn. Peter Rabbit. Squirrel Nuttin. Warne. 75c each.

Kipling—Just So Stories. Doubleday Page. \$1.90.

Carroll—Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass. Macmillan. \$1.75.

Poems of Childhood, by Eugene Field and illustrated by Maxfield Parrish. Scribner's. \$3.50.

Child's Garden of Verses, by Stevenson and illustrated by Jessie Wilcox Smith. Scribner's. \$3.50.

I read aloud selections from these two books and am still reading them.

FOR CHILDREN FROM 6 OR 7 TO 12 AND OLDER:

Alcott—Little Women. Illustrated by Stephens. Little Brown Company. \$2.50.

Defoe—Robinson Crusoe. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.75, or Harper \$1.75.

Twain—Adventures of Tom Sawyer. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.75, or Harper \$1.75.

Stevenson—Treasure Island. Scribners. \$3.50.

Merry Adventures of Robin Hood. Scribners. \$3.50.

Arabian Nights Entertainment. Illustrated by Maxfield Parrish. Scribners. \$3.50.

Dodge, Mrs. Mary M.—Hans Brinker. Scribners. \$1.50.

Seton—Wild Animals I Have Known. Grosset. \$1.00.

Spyri—Heidi. Ginn. 68c.

Cooper—The Last of the Mohicans. Scribners. \$3.50.

Tarkington, Booth—Penrod. Grosset. \$1.00.

Glimpses in a Christmas Shop

(Continued from page 4)

dainty ruffle at the outer edge and in the center was a little ring of ivory, practical as well as decorative. Sprinkled on the georgette were little rose-buds in pastel shades.

There were also some of Prang's nested boxes which had been dressed up. Some of them had been enameled while others had simply been oiled or waxed, allowing the grain of the wood to show. Bands of bright-colored sealing wax circled some of the boxes; others smiled forth with Peruvian or Egyptian designs which had stepped from out the pages of some authentic book to do Yuletide duty. Flowers were used discreetly on some of the boxes.

The Roast Fowl

(Continued from page 5)

pocket which will hold in the heat and moisture.

A general way of trussing is to draw the thighs up close to the body, thrusting a steel skewer thru the muscle into the body and out thru the muscle on the opposite side. White twine, wrapped about the thighs, held thus, will serve the same purpose. If the wings are desired at the sides, rather than under the back, a skewer placed in similar fashion will hold them. Some wish the drumsticks held down close to the body. If so, twine wound around them and fastened to the tail holds them in place.

The lack of fat in the flesh under the skin may be overcome by laying strips of bacon or salt pork across the breast and legs. Tying them on facilitates in browning the fowl. Next place the carcass on its back on the rack of the dripping pan with a close-fitting cover, which has only a small opening as a vent to allow the escape of steam and gas. This will retain most of the moisture and flavor of the juices.

The temperature of the oven should be hot until the bird begins to brown, one-half to three-fourths of an hour; then reduce to a moderate temperature. Baste the fowl every half hour by pouring fat, which has tried out in the lower part of